

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A method for migrating product data within an electronic commerce system, comprising:

monitoring requests for product data by users of a global content directory, the global content directory comprising:

a directory structure comprising a plurality of product classes organized in a hierarchy, each product class categorizing a plurality of products and defining one or more attributes of the products categorized in the product class; and

one or more pointers associated with each product class, each pointer identifying a seller database in which product data enabling a product transaction is stored for products associated with the product class;

identifying the location of a user;

determining, in response to monitoring requests by the user, that the requested product data should be migrated from a seller database to a storage location closer to the user than the seller database; and

initiating the migration of the product data from the seller database to the storage location.

2. The method of Claim 1, wherein a request for product data by a user comprises a selection of a product from search results obtained from one or more seller databases by the global content directory and communicated to the user.

3. The method of Claim 1, wherein determining that product data should be migrated comprises determining that the user has requested the product data a selected number of times within a selected period of time.

4. The method of Claim 1, wherein the product data that is migrated comprises product data associated with a particular product.

5. The method of Claim 1, wherein the product data that is migrated comprises product data associated with each of a plurality of products included in a product class.

6. The method of Claim 1, further comprising:

determining that the product data should no longer be stored at the storage location; and

allowing the product data to be deleted or overwritten with other product data at the storage location.

7. The method of Claim 6, wherein determining that the product data should no longer be stored at the storage location comprises determining that the user has not requested the product data for a specified period of time.

8. The method of Claim 6, wherein determining that the product data should no longer be stored at the storage location comprises determining that the storage location is needed for migration and storage of product data for a second user.

9. The method of Claim 1, wherein migrated product data is stored for access by each of a subset of the users and the storage location for the product data is determined based on the locations of each of the subset of users.

10. The method of Claim 9, wherein the location of each of the subset of users is weighted in the determination of the storage location based on the relative frequency with which each of the subset of users requests the product data.

11. The method of Claim 1, wherein determining that product data should be migrated comprises determining that product data from a plurality of seller databases should be migrated to the same storage location.

12. The method of Claim 11, further comprising merging the data from the plurality of seller databases into a single database at the storage location.

13. The method of Claim 1, wherein the product data is migrated to a computer associated with a user of the global content directory.

14. The method of Claim 13, wherein the product data is stored inside a firewall of the computer.

5 15. The method of Claim 1, wherein initiating the migration of the product data comprises instructing the seller database to copy the product data for caching at the storage location.

10 16. The method of Claim 15, further comprising instructing the seller database to create a pointer to the storage location and to update the migrated product data using the pointer when the product data is updated in the seller database.

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17. Software for migrating product data within an electronic commerce system, the software embodied in a computer-readable medium and operable to:

monitor requests for product data by users of a global content directory, the global content directory comprising:

5 a directory structure comprising a plurality of product classes organized in a hierarchy, each product class categorizing a plurality of products and defining one or more attributes of the products categorized in the product class; and

10 one or more pointers associated with each product class, each pointer identifying a seller database in which product data enabling a product transaction is stored for products associated with the product class;

identify the location of a user;

determine, in response to monitoring requests by the user, that the requested product data should be migrated from a seller database to a storage location closer to the user than the seller database; and

15 initiate the migration of the product data from the seller database to the storage location.

18. The software of Claim 17, wherein a request for product data by a user comprises a selection of a product from search results obtained from one or more seller databases by the global content directory and communicated to the user.

19. The software of Claim 17, wherein determining that product data should be migrated comprises determining that the user has requested the product data a selected number of times within a selected period of time.

20. The software of Claim 17, wherein the product data that is migrated comprises product data associated with a particular product.

21. The software of Claim 17, wherein the product data that is migrated comprises product data associated with each of a plurality of products included in a product class.

22. The software of Claim 17, further operable to:
determine that the product data should no longer be stored at the storage
location; and
allowing the product data to be deleted or overwritten with other product data
at the storage location.

23. The software of Claim 22, wherein determining that the product data
should no longer be stored at the storage location comprises determining that the user
has not requested the associated product for a selected period of time.

24. The software of Claim 22, wherein determining that the product data
should no longer be stored at the storage location comprises determining that the
storage location is needed for migration and storage of product data for a second user.

25. The software of Claim 17, wherein migrated product data is stored for
access by each of a subset of the users and the storage location for the product data is
determined based on the locations of each of the subset of users.

26. The software of Claim 25, wherein the location of each of the subset of
users is weighted in the determination of the storage location based on the relative
frequency with which each of the subset of users requests the product data.

27. The software of Claim 17, wherein determining that product data
should be migrated comprises determining that product data from a plurality of seller
databases should be migrated to the same storage location.

28. The software of Claim 27, further operable to merge the data from the
plurality of seller databases into a single database at the storage location.

29. The software of Claim 17, wherein the product data is migrated to a
computer associated with a user of the global content directory.

30. The software of Claim 29, wherein the product data is stored inside a firewall of the computer.

5 31. The software of Claim 17, wherein initiating the migration of the product data comprises instructing the seller database to copy the product data for caching at the storage location.

10 32. The software of Claim 31, further operable to instruct the seller database to create a pointer to the storage location and to update the migrated product data using the pointer when the product data is updated in the seller database.

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33. A method for migrating product data in an electronic commerce system, comprising:

monitoring requests for product data by users of a global content directory, the requests each comprising a selection of a product from search results obtained from one or more seller databases by the global content directory and communicated to the user, the global content directory comprising:

a directory structure comprising a plurality of product classes organized in a hierarchy, each product class categorizing a plurality of products and defining one or more attributes of the products categorized in the product class; and

one or more pointers associated with each product class, each pointer identifying a seller database in which product data enabling a product transaction is stored for products associated with the product class;

identifying the location of a user;

determining, in response to monitoring requests by the user, that the requested product data should be migrated from a seller database to a storage location closer to the user than the seller database based on the number of times the user has requested the product data within a specified period of time; and

instructing the seller database to:

copy the product data for caching at the storage location;

create a pointer to the storage location;

update the migrated product data using the pointer when the product data is updated in the seller database.

34. Software for migrating product data within an electronic commerce system, the software embodied in a computer-readable medium and operable to:

monitor requests for product data by users of a global content directory, the requests each comprising a selection of a product from search results obtained from one or more seller databases by the global content directory and communicated to the user, the global content directory comprising:

a directory structure comprising a plurality of product classes organized in a hierarchy, each product class categorizing a plurality of products and defining one or more attributes of the products categorized in the product class; and

one or more pointers associated with each product class, each pointer identifying a seller database in which product data enabling a product transaction is stored for products associated with the product class;

identify the location of a user;

determine, in response to monitoring requests by the user, that the requested product data should be migrated from a seller database to a storage location closer to the user than the seller database based on the number of times the user has requested the product data within a specified period of time; and

instruct the seller database to:

copy the product data for caching at the storage location;

create a pointer to the storage location;

update the migrated product data using the pointer when the product data is updated in the seller database.